

CD 2003--76/77

FACULTY *of* MUSIC



2002-2003

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Saturday, April 12, 2003
8 pm. MacMillan Theatre

Faculty of Music
Presents

University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra

Raffi Armenian, conductor

PROGRAMME

Richard Wagner
1813-1883

Prelude to Act 1 of *Lohengrin*
Paul McCullough, conductor

Frank Martin
1890-1974

Concerto for Seven Wind Instruments,
Timpani, Percussion and Strings
Allegro
Adagietto
Allegro vivace
*Nora Shulman, flute; Richard Dorsey, oboe;
Max Christie, clarinet; Michael Sweeney,
bassoon; Marcus Hennigar, horn; Barton
Woomert, trumpet; Gordon Sweeney, trombone*

INTERMISSION

Sergei Rachmaninoff
1873-1943

Symphony No. 2 in E minor, Op. 27
Largo - Allegro moderato
Allegro molto
Adagio
Allegro vivace



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Programme Notes

Prelude to Act I of *Lohengrin*

RICHARD WAGNER

Born in Leipzig, 1813

Died in Venice, 1883

Richard Wagner's interest in anonymous medieval epic of *Lohengrin* can be dated from 1841, when he was introduced to it at a meeting of the Königsberg Germanic Society. Beginning with a sketch of the libretto (he of course wrote all his own libretti) he produced a complete first draft of the work by 1846.

In the years following the opera's 1850 première in Weimar, under the baton of Franz Liszt, Wagner often remarked that he was the only German who had never heard *Lohengrin*. There was good reason for this: Wagner was living in exile in Switzerland by the time the opera was first staged. In 1849 the composer was obliged to make a hasty exit from Dresden following his involvement in a political insurrection. A supporter of radical reform, he made a speech to a group of republicans, vaguely espousing the abolition of private property, the establishment of a new religion, and the downfall of Germany's aristocracy. When open rebellion broke out and Prussian troops arrived to restore order, Wagner fled with an arrest warrant on his head. He remained in Switzerland until 1860, and did not hear his immensely popular opera until he attended an 1861 performance in Vienna.

It is often said that more has been written about Richard Wagner than any other figures except Jesus Christ and Napoleon. Be that as it may, much ink was certainly spilled over *Lohengrin*: the Viennese critic Eduard Hanslick believed the work was leading music in a problematic new direction. "From *Lohengrin* on," he wrote, "Wagner broke a new path, a dangerous path, dangerous

to life and limb; and this path is for him alone. Anyone who follows will break his neck . . ."

The Prelude is not particularly novel in its harmonic content (it is far less chromatic than *Tristan und Isolde*, composed in 1859), however its form is predicated upon Wagner's penchant for "endless" melodies, with seamless overlapping at cadential points. No listener could fail to apprehend – at least subconsciously – the Prelude's arc-like structure, commencing softly in the upper strings, gradually moving towards a brassy climax, and then returning just as gradually to pianissimos in the violins.

Concerto for Seven Wind Instruments, Timpani, Percussion and Strings

FRANK MARTIN

Born in Geneva, 1890

Died in Naarden, Holland, 1974

Frank Martin was the tenth child of a Calvinist minister. Growing up in a protestant household in Geneva where amateur music making was a prominent feature of family life, he acquired an early familiarity with the works of J.S. Bach. However his formal musical education was sketchy, and not until his university years did he decide to become a professional composer, abandoning his studies of physics and mathematics. Martin's meeting with conductor Ernest Ansermet, who gave the first performance of his oratorio *Les Dithyrambes* in 1918, had a strong influence on the young Swiss composer: Ansermet introduced him to the works of contemporary French composers and premiered many subsequent works by Martin.

After extended visits to Rome and Paris in the 1920s, Martin returned to Switzerland where he lectured on chamber music at the conservatory in

Geneva. In 1946, just after World War II, he moved with his Dutch-born wife to Holland, and in 1950-57 he taught at the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne, Germany. He died one of Europe's most respected composers.

Throughout his career, Martin displayed a strong interest in many schools of contemporary European music, but a strict allegiance to none – displaying what could be described as a kind of Swiss neutrality in issues of musical style. For instance, in an interview in 1964, he remarked: “Without attaching myself closely to the theories of Schoenberg, I tried to write according to his principles, always remaining faithful to my own musical sense.” Similarly, Ravel, Stravinsky, Hindemith and others were grist to his mill, and as a result many of his works defy categorization.

The concerto was a genre to which Martin turned frequently. His *Concerto for Seven Wind Instruments, Timpani, Percussion and Strings* was composed in 1949, and premiered in Bern, Switzerland. Neo-classical in style, this compact three-movement work recalls baroque concerto grosso form – perhaps a mid-twentieth century response to Bach's Brandenburg concertos. The lively opening movement, marked *Allegro*, introduces the soloists: first the oboe and clarinet; then the three brass instruments, horn, trumpet and trombone; and finally the flute and bassoon. The strings provide what is mostly a simple accompaniment to the colourful counterpoint of the winds. The second movement, *Adagietto*, features a steady quarter-note ostinato figure in the strings as a backdrop for solos in the winds. At the climax of the movement, the musical forces switch roles, with the winds briefly accompanying the strings. The boisterous third movement, *Allegro vivace*, contains a prominent solo for the timpani, and ends with a brassy flourish.

Symphony No. 2 in E Minor Op. 27

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

Born in Semyonovo, Russia, 1873

Died in Beverly Hill, USA, 1943

With the collapse of the family fortune in 1882, the Rachmaninoffs were obliged to sell off their country estates and move to St. Petersburg. There the gifted young Sergei studied music at the conservatory but proved an inattentive student, failing all his courses in 1887. His family shipped him off to the Moscow conservatory, where under a disciplined regime – piano practice began daily at 6:00 am – he excelled, graduating with the Great Gold Medal in 1891.

The accomplished young composer and pianist enjoyed favourable response to his earliest works: his opera *Aleko* was premiered in Moscow to the praise of Tchaikovsky and others. But in 1897 his career nearly foundered on the hostile criticism generated by his *Symphony No. 1 in D Minor Op. 13*. Leading the attack was the composer Cesar Cui, who likened the work to “a programmatic symphony on the Seven Plagues of Egypt.” (Other critics blamed the conductor, Alexander Glazunov, who may have been drunk on the podium.) Severely depressed, Rachmaninoff wrote almost nothing for the next three years, and it was only through psychological therapy that his confidence was restored.

It was not until 1906 that he attempted another symphony. By then he had married, his wife had born their first child, and the young family had relocated to Dresden, following Russia's failed 1905 Revolution. He laboured on the work for two years before conducting the first performance himself in St. Petersburg in 1908.

An expansive work in four movements, it begins with a brooding, unsettled *Largo* – *Allegro moderato*. Right from the start, composer shows his skill

as an archly Romantic melodist: sequences pile up upon one another in Tchaikovskian fashion, and climaxes appear as brief but inconclusive outbursts of pent-up energy. Tonality is uncertain – it is not always clear whether the piece is in a major or minor mode. The second movement, Allegro molto, is a dramatic scherzo containing a fateful quotation of the Dies Irae – although even here Rachmaninoff cannot resist the inclusion

of lyrical episodic material. The third movement, marked Adagio, is well known (the main theme found its way into a pop song in the 1970s) and displays Rachmaninoff's sophisticated sense of orchestration. The fourth movement, Allegro vivace, is predominantly exuberant, containing motivic fragments from earlier movements, and culminating in a big tune and rousing finale.

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Biographies

Director of Orchestral Studies at the University of Toronto, **Raffi Armenian** was trained in the European tradition. In Vienna he studied piano, conducting, voice and composition with Bruno Seidlhofer, Hans Swarowsky, Ferdinand Grossmann and Alfred Uhl respectively.

Maestro Armenian has conducted a television version of Menotti's *The Medium* which was nominated for an Emmy Award that season. He received a Juno nomination for a recording of Ravel and Schoenberg with one of Canada's great singers, Maureen Forrester, and the Canadian Chamber Ensemble, which he founded. In 1988, The CCE was awarded the Grand Prix du Disque from the Canadian Music Council for its *Serenades* album, which was subsequently nominated for a Juno Award. Repertoire from the Ensemble's *Music from Berlin in the 1920s* was selected by Woody Allen to underscore his film *Shadows and Fog*.

Sought after as a guest conductor, Mr. Armenian has led the Belgian Radio Orchestra, the Enescu Philharmonic of Bucharest at the Ravenna International Music Festival, the Montreal Symphony, the Winnipeg Symphony, the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, l'Orchestre symphonique de Québec, the Edmonton Symphony, the Hamilton Philharmonic and Violon du Roy.

Maestro Armenian held the position of

Music Director of the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony for 22 years and worked with such illustrious companies as the Canadian Opera Company, Michigan Opera Theater, l'Opéra de Montréal, Opera Columbus and for the famed Indiana University School of Music. Kitchener-Waterloo's acoustically superb "Centre in the Square" has a main theatre named Raffi Armenian Theatre. The design was strongly influenced by Maestro Armenian.

The Armenian legacy is secured by his highly acclaimed performance of Wagner's *Parsifal* in which tenor Jon Vickers made his final appearance in 1989. He recently conducted *La Belle Hélène* at l'Opéra de Québec and Mozart's *Così fan tutte* with Opera Hamilton. Mr. Armenian is a recipient of the Order of Canada and Honorary Doctorates from Wilfrid Laurier University and the University of Waterloo.

Nora Shulman is Principal Flutist of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Born in Los Angeles, Ms. Shulman graduated magna cum laude from California State University at Northridge. She has been an Associate Fellow at the Berkshire Music Center in Tanglewood, Co-Principal Flute of the Aspen Chamber Symphony at the Aspen Music Festival and for two years, Second Flute with the Colorado Symphony Orchestra.

An active solo and chamber performer, Ms. Shulman has appeared at the Guelph Spring Festival, on the Faculty Artist Series at U of T, with AMICI and on CBC Radio. Her most recent solo appearances have included concerts with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the National Arts Centre Orchestra and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

Ms. Shulman's newly released recordings include Mozart's Flute and Harp Concerto.

Richard Dorsey is Principal Oboe with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Before joining the TSO, he held principal positions with the U.S. Air Force Symphony Orchestra, the Oklahoma Symphony, the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, and was the original principal oboist with the Canadian Chamber Ensemble at Stratford. Richard has had a long relationship with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, performing as principal oboe with that orchestra at Tanglewood, in Boston's Symphony Hall and at Carnegie Hall. He has also performed and recorded with the National Arts Centre Orchestra with Pinchas Zuckerman. Richard has been on the faculty of the University of Oklahoma, Wilfrid Laurier University, University of Toronto, the Royal Conservatory and the Coutenay Music Festival. Richard studied at Boston University with Ralph Gomberg, and received a Master's degree from The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. In 1972 and 1973 Richard was recognized with performance prizes at the Tanglewood Music Center.

Michael Sweeney is Principal Bassoonist of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Apart from orchestral playing, he is a busy soloist with a great interest in Baroque, classical and post-modern work. He has performed concertos by Vivaldi,

Mozart, Weber, and Canadian composer Rudolph Komorous, and the concertantes of Haydn and Richard Strauss. As a chamber musician, he has frequently performed on the TSO Evening Overture series, and as a founding member of the Caliban Quartet of bassoonists. In 1992, he performed Glenn Gould's Bassoon Sonata at the international conference, marking the 60th anniversary of the composer's birth. Michael is also a member of the Bach Consort, a co-operative of instrumentalists and singers concertizing for the benefit of Toronto-based charity organizations.

Michael studied with Norman Herzberg at the University of Southern California, Kay Brightman at California State University (Fullerton) and Arthur Weisberg at both State University of New York at Stony Brook and the Yale School of Music where he also studied musicianship with Joan Panetti.

A native of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, **Harcus Hennigar** graduated from the University of Toronto in 1974. Following further study in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Russia, he became a member of the York Winds, a well-known Canadian wind ensemble. In 1979 he won first prize in the CBC Talent Competition. Mr. Hennigar has been a member of the Toronto Symphony since 1986 and is an instructor at the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto. He is actively involved in the Toronto Symphony Education Programme and has presented solo and small group school concerts throughout southern Ontario.

Barton Woomert has fourteen years experience with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. He came to the TSO from the Hamilton Philharmonic where he was Principal Trumpet. Before that he was a soloist and member of the U.S. Marine Band in Washington D.C. He was also

Principal Trumpet of the National Orchestra of Venezuela.

Barton's main teachers were James Hustis, Don Tison and Seymour Rosenfeld. He teaches at the University of Toronto and also privately. Barton has a group in the TSO called the Toronto Symphony Brass Quintet.

Gordon Sweeney has been Principal Trombone with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra since 1974. A graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, he is a former member of the San Antonio Symphony Orchestra, the New Orleans Philharmonic and served as Principal Trombone with the Dallas Symphony, immediately prior to his arrival in Toronto. Gordon is active as a teacher and ensemble coach at the University of Toronto.

Max Christie is Principal Clarinet of the National Ballet Orchestra. He is also committed to preparing and performing new music with some of the many fine ensembles for which Toronto is becoming well-known. He recently recorded a CD of the music of Melissa Hui and is heard on the recent Juno-nominated recording of the music of Alexina Louie. His performs with the Esprit Orchestra, New Music Concerts, and the Encounters ensemble, often in concerts broadcast on CBC radio. In November 2002 he performed the music of Pierre Boulez with New Music Concerts and Boulez conducting. Trained in Toronto and at Yale University, Mr. Christie teaches at both the University of Toronto and the Glenn Gould School.

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Kenneth Peacock was a distinguished alumnus of the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music. His body of work, as a composer and researcher for half a century, has made a significant impact on musical life in Canada. The Faculty of Music was very grateful to learn that Mr. Peacock had made a bequest to the University of Toronto in his will for the benefit of our music programs. With this legacy gift, the Faculty of Music will establish the Kenneth H. Peacock Lecture Series in Music in keeping with his lifelong interest in and contribution to the multi-dimensional study of music. Thank you Mr. Peacock.

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BOX OFFICE: 416-978-3744